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ABSTRACT

To explore journalism and mass communication administrators' attitudes toward the usefulness of paid consulting by faculty members, a study asked three research questions: (1) Does paid media consulting strengthen and enhance teaching? (2) Are educators who act as paid media consultants more productive researchers than colleagues who do not consult? and (3) How is paid media consulting weighed in tenure and promotion decisions? A 12-page questionnaire (with sections surveying attitudes; hours spent consulting, office hours and teaching loads; characteristics of institutions and programs surveyed; and demographic and career-related information) was completed by 169 (out of 366) administrators of journalism and mass communications programs in the United States. The data were controlled for correlations among these variables. Results indicated, among other things, that a majority of administrators (85%) agreed that paid media consulting strengthens and enhances teaching; that administrators tended to agree (43%) that faculty who consult are more productive researchers than non-consultants (though 40% were neutral); and that paid media consulting positively affected tenure and promotion decisions in about half the programs (52%). (Seventeen notes and three tables of data are attached.) (SR)

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PAID MEDIA CONSULTING BY JOURNALISM EDUCATORS: ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHING, RESEARCH AND TENURE AND PROMOTION

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PAID MEDIA CONSULTING BY JOURNALISM EDUCATORS: ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHING, RESEARCH AND TENURE AND PROMOTION

Journalism educators who act as paid consultants stay abreast of "real world" developments and needs in the field and fashion a mutually beneficial partnership with the mass media. Such activities may be useful and help to narrow the breach between journalism professors and media professionals, but how is such experience regarded in journalism education?

The objective of this study was to determine what effects journalism and mass communication administrators contend paid media consulting has on teaching, research and tenure and promotion. Recognizing that the quest for tenure and promotion places constant pressure on many journalism educators to be both effective teachers and productive researchers, the study explores whether consulting is seen as a positive factor in that process.

No previous research has focused on paid media consulting by journalism educators. Empirical evidence is needed as much of the general literature on paid faculty consulting is anecdotal in nature.

A small-scale study found overwhelming agreement among chief academic officers that extramural activities, such as consulting, were beneficial to both the university and the faculty member.[1] However, journalism and mass communication administrators recently ranked consulting as the lowest in importance among traditional faculty activities evaluated for tenure and promotion.[2]

Most colleges and universities reportedly have policies recognizing the advantages of paid outside consulting for faculty members. The policies stipulate that consulting augment the faculty member's professional development and that it be consistent with the school's goals and objectives.[3]

Nonetheless, some observers are concerned that faculty members might exploit consulting privileges by consulting on the university's time.[4] But the amount of time most educators spend on consulting is small.[5] There is also the worry that paid consultants might neglect their teaching obligations.[6]

However, documentation shows that paid consultants often are more active in their faculty roles than other educators. They tend to spend more time in graduate instruction and to hold the same number of office hours. More of them are engaged in research, and they publish more articles and books. They are also more likely to have tenure and to serve as a department chairperson.[7]

Further, many paid consultants have more contact with peers at other universities and appear to be more satisfied with their careers and their schools than non-consulting faculty members.[8] In fact, paid consulting activities are important to an institution's ability to retain good faculty in professional or applied disciplines such as journalism.[9]

Although paid consulting provides educators with supplemental income, factors other than money appear to motivate them to consult. They consult to further their careers,

strengthen their research and teaching and to help meet societal needs.[10]

Paid consulting may conceivably strengthen teaching and research. However, studies tend to document this productivity through measures of quantity, such as the number of classes taught, the amount of research conducted or the number of articles published.[11]

Of course, a correlation may exist between quantity and quality. Professors who attract students, obtain research monies and have their works accepted for publication are usually competent teachers, successful researchers and prolific writers.[12]

The literature indicates that paid consulting by faculty members can be highly beneficial both for the faculty member and his or her university. The following research questions explore journalism and mass communication administrators' attitudes toward the usefulness of such experience.

1) Does paid media consulting strengthen and enhance teaching?

2) Are educators who act as paid media consultants more productive researchers than colleagues who do not consult?

3) How is paid media consulting weighed in tenure and promotion decisions?

Methods

This study was concerned exclusively with paid media consulting by tenured and tenure-track faculty members in journalism and mass communication programs. These educators are most affected by teaching and research evaluations and the assessment of proprietary consulting in tenure and promotion decisions.

Consulting referred to paid media consulting. It included activities such as a writing coach, market analyst or management consultant for the mass media and advertising and public relations agencies.

Top journalism and mass communication administrators were selected for the national survey because they are often instrumental in deciding the academic merit of a faculty member's consulting activities. Due to differences in nomenclature and types of programs, administrators held titles such as dean, director, head or chairperson.

They worked in public and private four-year institutions and headed colleges, schools, departments and programs in journalism, mass communication, mass media and communications. For simplicity, the various programs were categorized as journalism and mass communication.

In early October 1987, 12-page questionnaires were sent to the total population of administrators at U.S. journalism and mass communication programs listed in the 1987 AEJMC Journalism and Mass Communication Directory. A follow-up letter was sent

Nov. 6, 1987, to administrators who had not responded. Of the 366 administrators queried, 169 replied, for a response rate of 46%.

Because administrators in this survey are a population, not a sample, it might be argued that statistical analysis, which assumes randomly sampled data, is not applicable. However, such analysis can be legitimately applied to determine if there are actual differences among subgroups. Statistical tests were used for this purpose[13] and differences were significant at $p < .05$.

The survey instrument was developed in four sections. The first set of questions, framed as statements on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, focused on administrators' attitudes toward the effects of paid media consulting on teaching, research and tenure and promotion. The second portion concerned the number of hours educators spend consulting, their number of office hours and their teaching loads.

The third group of questions looked at characteristics of the academic institutions and journalism and mass communications programs represented in the study. The final part focused on demographic and career-related information, including respondents' ages, education and years of administrative and consulting experience.

About half of the administrators surveyed represented colleges and universities with fewer than 10,000 students. Nearly 70% of the respondents were from public institutions (Table 1).

More than 100 journalism and mass communication programs had undergraduate enrollments of less than 300 students. The majority of programs offered undergraduate degrees only. A third of the programs were ACEJMC accredited.

Results

Most journalism and mass communication administrators were male, and nearly three-quarters were 35-54 years old.[14] A similar number held a doctorate and received their highest degree in either journalism or communications (Table 2).

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents had been administrators for six years or less. Nine out of 10 administrators had worked in the media, most for 10 years or less. The majority earned less than $45,000 a year.

Seventy-eight percent had acted as paid media consultants, and about a third were currently involved in consulting. Nearly all such respondents said they considered consulting valuable to their careers.

Most administrators agreed that consulting opportunities help attract and retain good faculty members and provide external confirmation of the quality and relevance of their special expertise. Responses were about evenly split about whether consultants are primarily motivated by financial incentives.

Teaching effectiveness

Most administrators agreed that paid media consulting strengthens and enhances teaching. Of the 85% who agreed, 29% strongly agreed. Only 2% disagreed.

The extent that administrators encouraged paid media consulting was positively correlated with the degree that they claimed consulting benefits teaching. Ninety-two percent of those who encouraged consulting saw the benefit compared with 73% who were neutral.

Respondents were most likely to agree that consulting strengthens and enhances teaching when their programs had relatively high proportions of consulting faculty. Nearly all agreed when those faculty spent five to eight hours on average consulting per week. But only 54% agreed when more than eight hours a week were spent consulting.

Administrators with fewer than seven years experience working in the media and those with more than 10 years experience were most likely to agree that consulting enriches teaching. Those with a master's degree were slightly more likely than colleagues holding a doctorate to agree that consulting positively affects teaching; 93% compared with 83%.

A majority of administrators tended to disagree that consulting faculty members neglect their students. Respondents of programs with faculty members who spent more than eight hours on average consulting per week were most likely to say professors who consult tend to neglect their students. Forty-five percent

agreed compared with about 10% who had faculty members who spent eight hours or less consulting.

Overall, consulting and non-consulting faculty members within each program had similar teaching loads and number of office hours. Fourteen administrators said non-consultants kept more office hours than consultants. Four said it was the other way around. Twelve administrators responded that non-consulting faculty had heavier teaching loads compared with two administrators who said the heavier course loads fell on consultants.

Research productivity

Administrators tended to agree (43%) that faculty who act as paid media consultants are more productive researchers than non-consultants, but almost as many were neutral (40%). Seventeen percent disagreed.

Nearly 60% of those who encouraged their faculties to consult agreed that consultants are more productive researchers. More than three-quarters of those who said consulting was valuable or sometimes valuable to their careers agreed.

When their programs had relatively high proportions of consulting faculty members, respondents were most likely to agree that consultants are more productive researchers than non-consultants.

However, only 39% of faculty consultants reportedly sometimes found ways to publish research in refereed journals

resulting from proprietary consulting. One-third seldom did, and about a quarter never did. More consultants (51%) at public colleges and universities than at private ones (30%) were said often or sometimes to accomplish this.

About two-thirds of the respondents who had faculty members who sometimes published research developed from consulting activities agreed that consultants are more productive researchers than non-consultants. Interestingly, fewer than half agreed whose faculty members often produced such research (Table 3).

Developing research stemming from paid media consulting was seen as important by about three-fourths of the administrators. All agreed who had faculty members who often found ways to publish consulting-related research in refereed journals. This compared with 62% of those whose faculty members seldom converted consulting into published articles.

A slight majority of the administrators agreed that research resulting from paid consulting must be publishable before it can be credited toward tenure and promotion. About 60% of those who encouraged consulting indicated this.

Nearly two-thirds of the administrators with doctorates compared with about a quarter of those with master's degrees contended that research generated from consulting must be publishable to be counted toward tenure and promotion. Unlike their higher paid colleagues, respondents with salaries of less

than $30,000 tended to disagree that research resulting from paid consulting must be publishable.

Tenure and promotion

Paid media consulting positively affected tenure and promotion decisions in about half of the programs (52%). Administrators were most likely to say it influenced tenure and promotion some of the time (37%) rather than most (9%) or all of the time (6%). Consulting was not an issue in tenure and promotion considerations for a quarter of the programs, and it was never a positive factor for 23% of them.

Programs were more likely to have educators who consult when consulting had a positive effect on tenure and promotion decisions. The extent that administrators agreed consulting should be a positive factor in tenure and promotion was strongly related to the frequency it was positively weighed in such decisions.

The degree that they encouraged their faculties to consult was strongly related to whether they maintained it should positively effect tenure and promotion decisions. Eighty percent of those who strongly encouraged or encouraged consulting said it should, compared with 42% who were neutral.

Nearly a quarter of the administrators who encouraged their faculties to consult headed programs where consulting was a positive issue in tenure and promotion decisions most or all of the time. However, consulting was never a positive issue in such

decisions for 20% of the respondents, and for nearly as many, it was not an issue.

About two-thirds of master program administrators were likely to consider paid media consulting a positive issue in tenure and promotion decisions, compared with 44% for doctoral and undergraduate-only program administrators. Consulting was also most likely to be an issue in such decisions in programs offering master's degrees. It was an issue in such programs 84% of the time compared with 75% of the time for programs granting doctorates and 66% for undergraduate-only programs.

A slight majority of public and private college administrators were likely to weigh consulting positively in tenure and promotion decisions. However, private school administrators were less likely to consider consulting an issue in tenure and promotion decisions by about two to one; 39% compared with 20%.

Discussion and Conclusions

Most journalism and mass communication administrators agreed that paid media consulting strengthens and enhances teaching. Respondents were most likely to agree that consulting enriches teaching when their programs had relatively high proportions of consulting faculty.

It would appear that administrators appreciate the practical relevance of teaching by such faculty. The quality of most teaching can benefit from real world examples of the theories

being taught. Placement of graduates in relevant internships and permanent positions can also develop from faculty consulting.

Administrators were more likely to agree that paid media consulting strengthens and enhances teaching when educators spent no more than eight hours consulting per week. The obvious concern is that professors who devote more than one day a week to consulting may be less accessible to students. However, this study provided further evidence that faculty consultants do not neglect their students and have similar teaching loads and number of office hours as non-consultants.

Similar to earlier research,[15] journalism and mass communication administrators tended to agree that faculty consultants are more productive researchers than non-consultants. Respondents were most likely to agree when their programs had a relatively high proportion of consultants and when consulting did not exceed one day a week.

It appears that consulting can be a valuable adjunct to research. Consulting activities not only can provide opportunities for testing mass communication theories but also can be a valuable source of new research ideas. For inexperienced journalism educators, not yet accomplished at obtaining research grants, consulting can provide a data base for developing publishable research.

Most of the respondents indicated that it was important to develop research stemming from consulting activities. About half said such research must be publishable before it can be counted

toward tenure and promotion. Nevertheless, many media consultants reportedly often fail to publish.

Paid media consulting was weighed positively in tenure and promotion decisions in about half of the programs. Understandably, educators were more likely to consult in programs where consulting had a positive effect on tenure and promotion.

Public and private college administrators were equally likely to weigh paid media consulting positively in tenure and promotion decisions. However, those at private schools were less likely to consider it an issue in such decisions.

Faculty consulting has been described as "a natural extension and application of one's professional and scholarly expertise outside the academic institution." As such, it relates directly to the prescribed mission of most universities: teaching, research and service.[16]

Nevertheless, journalism and mass communication administrators recently ranked consulting lowest in importance among activities usually considered for tenure and promotion.[17] In this study, however, they strongly indicated that paid media consulting enriches teaching and bolsters research productivity. The apparent explanation, which merits further inquiry, is that administrators tend to view the possible benefits derived from media consulting, and not the consulting experience itself, as most important in the tenure and promotion process.

This study was an initial attempt to explore some questions that journalism educators are known to ask about paid media

consulting. A future companion study will look at the extensiveness of such outside consulting and departmental policies concerning it. Other researchers might wish to survey media consultants themselves about the process.

Similar to previous research on outside professional consulting, quantitative, not qualitative, measures were largely applied in this study. The data were controlled for correlations such as number of paid consulting faculty members, hours spent consulting per week and the frequency that consulting positively affected tenure and promotion decisions.

Future research might attempt to evaluate the quality of paid media consultants' professional experiences or to compare the effectiveness of their and non-consultants' teaching methods. It might also look at the nature, as well as the extent, of the influence of consulting activities on journalism educators' research priorities and academic objectivity.

This study should benefit journalism and mass communication administrators who desire to know what academic significance their colleagues accorded paid media consulting by faculty members. It should also interest journalism educators who may want to become media consultants.

NOTES

1. Michael C. Weston, "'Outside' Activities of Faculty Members," The Journal of College and University Law, 7:69 (1980-1981).

2. John C. Schweitzer, "Promotion and Tenure in Schools and Departments of Journalism and Mass Communications" (unpublished 1988 study, Texas Tech University), p. 3.

3. Raj Aggarwal, "Faculty Members as Consultants: A Policy Perspective," College and University Personnel Association Journal, 32:17-20 (1981); and Gerald V. Teague, "Faculty Consulting: Do Universities Have 'Control'?" Research in Higher Education, 17:182 (1982).

4. Kristine E. Dillon, "Outside Professional Activities," National Forum, 69:39-40 (Fall 1979).

5. Carl V. Patton, "Consulting by Faculty Members," Academe 66:182 (May 1980).

6. Eric Ashby, Adapting Universities to a Technological Society (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974), p. 81.

7. James D. Marver and Carl V. Patton, "The Correlates of Consultation: American Academics in 'The Real World,'" Higher Education, 5:329-330 (August 1976); and Carl V. Patton and James D. Marver, "Paid Consulting by American Academics," Educational Record, 60:175, 180-182 (1979).

8. See Carol M. Boyer and Darrell R. Lewis, "Faculty Consulting: Responsibility or Promiscuity?" Journal of Higher Education, 55:645 (September/October 1984).

9. Aggarwal, op. cit., p. 17.

10. Carol M. Boyer and Darrell R. Lewis, "Faculty Consulting and Supplemental Income," ERIC Digest, EDO-HE-86-4 (1986), p. 3.

11. Patton and Marver, op. cit., p. 178.

12. Patton, op. cit., p. 184.

13. See Robert F. Winch and Donald T. Campbell, "Proof? No. Evidence? Yes. The Significance of Tests of Significance," The American Sociologist, 4:140-143 (1969).

14. Age breakdown was similar to earlier data collected on college and university professors who act as paid consultants. See Marver and Patton, op. cit., p. 327.

15. Ibid., p. 329.

16. Boyer and Lewis, op. cit., p. 638.

17. Schweitzer, op. cit.

TABLE 1: INSTITUTION AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

INSTITUTION	Percentage (N = 168)
Student enrollment	
Fewer than 3,000	18
3,000 - 9,999	33
10,000 - 19,999	27
20,000 - 29,999	13
30,000 or more	9
Source of funding	
Public	69
Private	31
PROGRAM	
Degrees offered	
Undergraduate degrees only	56
Undergraduate and master's degrees	34
Undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees	10
Number of undergraduate majors	
None	1
1 - 99	18
100 - 199	24
200 - 299	18
300 - 499	15
500 - 999	15
1,000 or more	9
Number of master's students	
None	59
1 - 24	15
25 - 49	13
50 - 99	9
100 or more	4
Number of doctoral students	
None	90
1 - 19	5
20 or more	5
Primary emphasis	
Professional	46
Theoretical	4
Professional/theoretical mix	50

TABLE 2: ADMINISTRATOR CHARACTERISTICS

	Percentage (N = 166)
Education	
Master's degree	26%
Doctoral degree	74
College major	
Communication	46
Journalism	30
Other	24
Sex	
Male	87
Female	13
Age	
35 - 44	33
45 - 54	43
55 or older	24
Salary	
Less than $30,000	20
$30,000 - $44,999	35
$45,000 - $59,999	27
$60,000 or more	18
Administrative experience	
Less than 1 year	8
1 - 3 years	34
4 - 6 years	22
7 - 10 years	15
11 - 15 years	11
More than 15 years	10
Media experience	
Less than 1 year	11
1 - 3 years	17
4 - 6 years	26
7 - 10 years	16
11 - 15 years	13
More than 15 years	17
Consulting experience	
Less than 1 year	13
1 - 3 years	16
4 - 5 years	12
6 - 10 years	23
11 - 15 years	10
More than 15 years	26

TABLE 3: RESEARCH DEVELOPED FROM PAID MEDIA CONSULTING

Faculty consultants are more productive researchers.

Faculty members find ways to publish consulting-related research in refereed journals.	Total (N = 149)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Often	6%	22%	22%	45%	11%	0%
Sometimes	39	22	45	24	9	0
Seldom	32	17	27	42	12	2
Never	23	0	18	50	23	9

Chi-square = .0053* d.f. = 12

Developing consulting-related research is important.

Faculty members find ways to publish consulting-related research in refereed journals. (N = 149)						
Often	6	78	22	0	0	0
Sometimes	39	24	55	17	4	0
Seldom	32	17	45	28	10	2
Never	23	6	53	32	9	0

Chi-square = .0027 d.f. = 12

Consulting-related research must be publishable for tenure and promotion.

Administrators' advice to faculty members about consulting. (N = 161)						
Strongly encourage	16	8	4	24	32	32
Encourage	47	18	43	8	29	1
Neutral	37	22	37	18	22	2

Chi-square = .0000 d.f. = 12

*Chi-square differences significant at $p < .05$.